

Paul's Travel Tips for India

I am Paul Nielsen (Servas Australia) and am half of the Servas International MTS Team. My wife Vicki and I decided to have a 5-week holiday in India prior to SICOGA 2022. We arrived in Delhi on Oct 16th. Below are some of our tips and observations that you might find helpful:

1. **India is wonderful.** The people are mostly friendly and helpful

2. **Travel Agents:**

We have been fortunate to have found a good travel agent:

Haroon

+91 9810123498

Visit India Tours

Visit India Tours

(Unit of Indian Tribal Tours)

Recognised by Govt. of India (Ministry of Tourism)

21/3, Bhagat Singh Marg, Gol Market, New Delhi (INDIA)

Ph: +91 11 23365337, 23343906, 23340768, 23340769

Mob: +91 9810123498 / 9810159457 / 9810997861

WhatsApp : +91 9810123498

e-mail: info@ittmails.com, Web: www.india-tour.com

Going a Step Further looking for a Driver Guide:

We had a Driver Guide for Delhi and Rajasthan. If you contact:

Amit Sharma

WhatsApp +91 98108 13953 Amit will give you a great rate as a Driver/Guide. He really helped us enormously as we travelled for 2 weeks in this part of India.

Choosing how you travel in India:

1. You can travel in India totally independently but if you wish to do so, it helps to have lots of time.
2. You can book a tour with tried and trusted tour groups.
3. You can book an independent bespoke tour with a tour operator/agent.

We have chosen option 3 which means Vicki and I can see a lot of India with a full itinerary using a driver and/or guide but custom-made tour.

We looked at using Rough Guides as our travel agent. They are good if you feel the need to have a Western intermediary with your Indian agent but you will pay around 100% more if you use this type of service. The itinerary that Rough Guides gave us was done by Incredible India

<https://www.incredibleindia-tourism.org> which is an Indian travel agent who you can go to directly. We asked ourselves why not go direct to an Indian travel agent like Incredible India but we felt we might cause trouble bypassing Rough Guides. So then I found Visit India Tours...who are just getting back up and running post Covid.

3. **Safety**

- a. Most people in India are good people like everywhere, but still take care of your possessions and be safe. This is especially so for women. Men always wear long pants in India. Indian women are often wearing a Sari. Indian men and women don't seem to wear shorts. Generally dressing modestly we think is the right thing to do.
- b. There is street food and street food. Be careful or pay the price. Vegetarian is safer than meat. Freshly cooked is generally wise. Looks can be deceiving. Some food places look good but you get sick. Others look dodgy and the food is good to eat. Tread your own path!

4. Finance

Make sure you let your bank know you will be abroad. My bank allows me to do this by editing my online banking profile. Importantly if you wish to use your credit card for anything other than ATM withdrawals, you will need to work out how to do this with your bank. There is a 3D Secure feature some banks use to allow international transactions while abroad ... Currently not having done this is preventing me from booking and paying for my flight from Pune to Delhi to go home. I have tried online chatting with my bank to no avail. ATM is my only financial friend in India. Some ATMs have terrible exchange rates and there are high fees (about AUD\$11/transaction). It appears my maximum withdrawal is 10,000 INR (About AUD\$200) per time. I can do this 3 times consecutively with 30,000 being my maximum withdrawal per day. We are spending about 3000 to 5000 INR/day ... If you eat at a tourist restaurant it can easily cost 2000 INR.

5. Tipping in India

- a. At the lower end of town, Indian workers are not well paid and rely heavily on Tips to make ends meet. A Guide earns as little as 11000 INR/Month and their power bill can be 6000 INR/Month.
- b. Tip Rate: On a personal tour just a couple with a guide & driver, Guides are: USD\$10/Person/Day. Drivers USD\$5/Person/Day. We paid Guides 500 INR/Person/Day and Half of that for Drivers. However, if we liked what they did (always), we paid an additional 500 INR.
- c. Toilet Staff, we paid 10 INR, Bell Boys we very happy with 100 INR.
- d. Tips do add up on a long trip so do include them in your travel budget.

6. Entry to Monuments, Temples, Special Sites:

- a. Travel agents typically exclude Entry fees from packages. The reason being, everyone does not want to do the same things.
- b. Entry fees for Foreigners can be expensive e.g. Typically 600 INR/Person (about USD\$9). Some days we paid this twice for different entries.
- c. As with tips, these fees add up and should be included in your travel budget.

7. What you need when you arrive: Money and SIM Card.

- a. The SIM card story is told well on: <https://thewanderingquinn.com/sim-card-india/>
- b. In Delhi Airport I found the Airtel stand next to the Costa Coffee and the ATM was next to Airtel.
- c. The ATM maximum withdrawal is 10,000 Rupees.
- d. My credit card doesn't seem to work online so well in India. I recommend have enough cash at all times for your immediate needs.
- e. The tip for the Airtel SIM is that it can take as much as a day to activate. You will probably find you cannot use your mobile service immediately after the purchase. However, once working it provides free text and calls throughout India (not international) and 1.5GB of data per day. This cost is 239 Rupees for 28 days ... good value I think. The recharge is the same price for another 28 days. There is an app where you see the prices etc.
- f. Update: The Airtel SIM: is working really well for me, but I have been getting too many ads for Airtel and Other services. I googled and found it can be turned off by going to: www.airtel.in/airtel-dnd/ and register for the no marketing option....It is easy when you know the url.
- g. Recharging the SIM is a pain without an active credit card in India. Amit, my great driver guide did this for me using the Airtel app on his phone. I paid him in cash.

8. Power

When travelling abroad I take a power board and a multiport USB adapter (USB C and A) to cover all my power needs. I then need an adapter for India. Many better hotels provide universal sockets (110 and 240 volts) but if they don't it is helpful to have your own adapters. My reading indicated I would probably need an Type D pin adapter as below but I am yet to see anywhere (Delhi, Agra or Varanasi) where I can use this. I expect I might see this in Kerela (South India).



What I have found commonly in the places I have been so far are the Type C and Type M sockets.



Type C



Type M

I could be wrong but I think the type C will go into the 2 sockets of a type M but you will have no Earth. I know one of the 2 pin adapters that I have on hand is working this way.

Note if you are coming from a place that does not use 240 volts. You will need a power board that can do the conversion for you.